



African people do not all see things in a same perspective. There are things that some cultures consider as wrong which others find as right. It depends on the way witchcraft is perceived within a culture. Some traditions in Africa (the Lower Congo Province in DRC) consider witches as those who received insight to control, supervise or to protect their respective families.

In this regard, witchcraft, to some extent, was considered as an African leadership's value. In fact, one of its values had been that of "a seer" in the sense that he could perceive in advance any enemy who would try to harm a family member.

This sort of witchcraft had existed in many African families in the Lower Congo Province, especially, in the *Yombe* culture, a tribe within the *Bakongo* ethnic group. This kind of witchcraft brought about success to any one who was concerned about it. In fact, this explains some Congolese fortune which is based on witchcraft's power. Witchcraft is indeed an activity performing magic in order to help or to harm other people. In this regard, Joseph Ntedika (2000:49) asserts that a witch acts secretly during the night whether to harm people or to liberate them from other wrongdoers. Most of the time, a witch makes oneself hated when people learn that he or she often harm other persons in the community. In the Lower Congo Province, certain persons among *Bakongo* people, because of their fear of witchcraft, they often have recourse to fetishistic practices to be protected. The *Bakongo* people distinguish between witches (*zindoki* in plural and *ndoki* in singular) and fetishists (*zinganga* in plural and *nganga* in singular). For them, witches act during the night while fetishists operate openly in public places just to help those in need. In this respect, it is well known among the *Bakongo* people that a witch (*ndoki*) presents an anti-social character while a fetishist (*nganga*) is considered being at the people's service (Ntedika 2000:49).

The term *ndoki*, "witch," in the *Bakongo* culture, refers more to the people's enemy than to their benefactor in the community. The witchcraft understanding in the

*Bakongo* culture had been interwoven with other traditional beliefs which brought about some confusing religious thoughts among the people. Among these traditional beliefs are “the spirits of ancestors” which refer whether to the witchcraft in the community or to the source of power on which African leaders often rely on (Mavinga 2010:500). A witch, so-called *ndoki*, relates to other “spirits” that seek to control whether people in the community or in a country. This generates a strong desire among certain people, in the DRC in particular and in Africa in general, to rely on the “spirits world.” Indeed, for African (Congolese) there is continuity between the material or visible and immaterial or invisible world (Mavinga 2010:500 citing Okure 1998:10).

### Traditional Witchcraft's roots

This paragraph focuses on *Bakongo* traditional beliefs on “spirits.” “Spirits,” in the *Bakongo* beliefs, are mediators between human beings and Supra-natural being. In this connection, people in Africa (the DRC) seek to relate to these “spirits” in order to acquire great power that could help them to control or subdue people’s life in the community. For the reason, a *Mukongo* person relies to these “spirits” to overcome all circumstances of his or her life. Witchcraft is then one aspect of this traditional beliefs in African continent. This aspect distinguishes good and bad spirits. Bad spirits usually operate in secret to harm people in contrast to good spirits that a *Mukongo* person worships. According to *Mukongo* person, these “spirits” possess earthly powers, so-called *bakisi ba tsi*, that could allow him or her to become successful. Among these *bakisi ba tsi* meaning “earthly spirits,” a *Mukongo* person indicates that often they are legion (Ntedika 2000:50). Every area got theirs. Furthermore, we count out two categories of these earthly spirits called *bakisi ba tsi*: the forest spirits (*bakisi ba nsitu*) and the village spirits (*bakisi ba buala*). All these spirits in my view had been different manifestations of witchcraft among the *Bakongo* people in various areas whether they are living in the forest, at the side of the road or on the waterside (2000:50). This conception of “spirits” has changed and moved on because of globalisation which tries to bring all cultures close one another.

### Modern African (Congolese) Society

Today, the African (Congolese) concept of witchcraft has been interwoven over time with western traditional spiritualities. If the African tradition promoted collective life in the community, the present day, most Africans have moved over the individualistic life as we find it in any western society. The African spiritualities are now intertwined with those of westerners. In fact, “we currently find Africans becoming ‘Rosicrucians,’ members of esoteric circles which refer to ‘the knowledge of the secrets of the nature and other forms of power’” (Mavinga 2010:501-502 citing Robinson 1999:1221). This sort of “spiritualistic mixture” has a concomitant effect on the morality of the majority of Africans (Congolese). As a consequence, the moral and cultural values of most Africans (Congolese) have been severely affected.

### The Individual laments and the Concept of Witchcraft in the Old Testament

I focus on individual laments as pointed out from the psalmists in the Hebrew Bible. The latter speaks of enemies who are identified as witches or sorcerers (Ademiluka 2009:216). The psalms commonly use two terms which denote enemy. They are specifically *y;äy>aow>* and *y;äc’* which mean respectively “enemy or foe” and “oppressor, persecutor or enemy.” *y;äy>ao* derives from the root *איב*, meaning “to hate, to treat” as an enemy, while *y;äc’* derives from the root *צר*, meaning “to show hostility to, to besiege, to assail, to attack, and to instigate.” The aforementioned terms connote the witch’s actions which somehow make people suffer within the community. This is confirmed by the use of the term *y;äc’* which means sometimes “adversary” (Ps 69:19) and other times meaning “*satan*” (38:20; 71:13) (Ademika 2009:217 citing Brill 2000:43). This shortly shows a sort of similarity between the concept of *ndoki*, “witchcraft” in the Africa tradition and that of

yb;äy>ao and yr;äc' meaning "enemy, adversary or satan" in the Hebrew Bible.  
Such a similarity could be analysed and reflected onto the current African  
witchcraft laments situation.

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